TL 3070

CNRM INDONESIAN NATIONAL DAY STATEMENT

17 August 1996

Indonesian situation similar to East Timor oppression

National Council of
Maubere Resistance

The Suharto regime's violence against the people of Indonesia has finally come to be noticed by international public opinion in recent weeks. The people of East Timor have experienced the same types of persecution, human rights violations, state sponsored terror and intimidation for twenty one years. The contemptible methods currently being used by the Indonesian authorities to oppress their people and confuse the outside world, follow the same models that have been applied for so long in East Timor. The people of East Timor express their deepest solidarity with the oppressed population of Indonesia, condemning the state sponsored violence taking place, and calling on the international commuity to put effective pressure on the Suharto regime so as to free East Timor and liberate Indonesia.

On August 17 1945 the Indonesian nation proclaimed its Independence, after suffering centuries of foreign domination. On that day in Jakarta, the great leaders Sukarno and Hatta articulated the deepest aspiration of the Indonesian people- freedom. They did so full of joy and confidence in their nation's bright future. Their aspirations and visions were enshrined in the Indonesian Constitution which acknowledges freedom to be the right of all peoples without exception, and calls for colonialism to be banished from the earth.

Fifty one years later, in 1996, the reality of Indonesia is saddening. The military-backed Suharto dictatorship actively engages in a colonialism of the most brutal kind in the illegally occupied territory of East Timor, and robs the people of Indonesia of their freedom. Meanwhile, foreign governments, lured by Indonesia's rich business potentialities, still act in futile attempts to protect the image of the Suharto regime.

Yet, the mantle of false appearances with which Suharto has been able to deceive the outside world for so long has now been visibly torn, providing irrefutable evidence of the sad Indonesian reality. The crude, brutal and violent intervention in the affairs of the minority political party PDI, to oust independent and outspoken Chairperson Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's independence proclamator, has allowed the world to clearly see the techniques used by the regime to terrorise the Indonesian people into acquiescence and exclude them from political participation.

The bloody storming of PDI headquarters by the Indonesian military (ABRI) on 27 July, in which an as yet unconfirmed number of people, quite likely around 100, have been massacred, has also been an eye opener for many. Despite the clarity of the events that took place in full view of foreign observers in the heart of the country's capital, the regime persists in promoting an absurd fabricated version that, as is so often the case, blames the victims and makes no reference to the culprits.

Furthermore, in order to divert public attention from the serious responsibility for unconstitutional violent action facing the authorities and ABRI, a grotesque witch hunt has been launched, reviving the 'communist' ghosts of the past. These are claimed to have

reincarnated in the small PRD party of Indonesian youths, which the government has declared to be chiefly responsible for all the violence on and following 27 July. Dissidents are being accused of being affiliated to PRD, and are thus subject to extreme forms of violence, imprisonment and extensive human rights violations.

Dozens of PRD members, including its young Chairman Budiman Sudjatmiko, and other pro-democracy activists have been detained in recent days, subjected to intense torture, and deprived of access to legal assistance while their whereabouts are not disclosed. No investigation has been launched into the events of 27 July and following days, and a large number of disappeared victims remain unaccounted for. Yielding to ABRI intimidation, the government-sponsored National Human Rights Commission, after issuing some initial weak condemning statements, has postponed the disclosure of the findings of its hasty preliminary investigations into deaths and disappearances to an unannounced future date.

Meanwhile, the authorities, assisted by extra constitutional pressure elements such as the brutal 'Pemuda Pancasila' thugs, continue to victimise the most vocal opponents of the social injustice, nepotism, collusion, corruption, and lack of freedom that characterise the Indonesia of Suharto. Under the justification of protecting the state and society from 'PRD neo-Marxist subversives', a reign of terror and arbitrary violence against defenders of the Indonesian Constitution and the democratic principles it enshrines has been unleashed. Prominent Indonesians such as Dr Mochtar Pakhpahan leader of the country's independent labour union SBSI, are kept in jail under procedurally incorrect and trumped up charges, Megawati Sukarno Putri and world famous novelist Pramoedya Ananta Tur are harassed by police questioning, and scores of lesser known individuals are beaten, kidnapped by security forces, have their possessions vandalised, and subjected to torture and mistreatment. The corrupt judges of the puppet Indonesian judiciary refuse to hear clearly justified claims by victims of state sponsored terror, cowardly seeking refuge in ludicrous excuses like toothache attacks.

To divert public attention from the true source of the malaise facing Indonesia after three decades of Suharto dictatorship, that is the enormous injustices in terms of wealth distribution, lack of opportunities for the economically weak majority, institutional decay and lack of basic freedoms, the regime fosters its current 'anti communists' witch hunt, adding an even more dangerous element to it: the attempt to incite religious hatred against Christians by extreme elements in the Islamic sector. Not only has there been a proliferation of 'communist danger warnings', but Christians and 'atheists' are portrayed as heavily involved in the 'anti-patriotic subversion and terrorist' acts allegedly performed by PRD. To feed xenophobic nationalistic emotions further, thinly veiled references are made to support for PRD 'terrorism' coming from 'liberal', 'atheistic', neighbouring (Western) foreign countries.

For the East Timorese, and those who are familiar with the East Timor drama for the last twenty one years, the current events in Indonesia are as clear as water to interpret. They reflect the same contemptible pattern of untruths, manipulations, brutality, injustice and violations of human rights which the Maubere people of East Timor have been made to endure since the Suharto regime began intervening in their affairs in 1974. The methods have not changed. The tactics, devices and techniques employed are the same. Even the discourse, after more than two decades, remains unchanged, showing how basic, out of date and exhausted the Suharto regime is. And all of this after massive Western support and underwriting. What benefits have been brought by the hundreds of billions of dollars spent, except to make Suharto and cronies the richest men in the world?

East Timor has had its share of 'communist' accusations to justify the brutal Indonesian armed intervention and the genocide of over one third of its people. It has experienced Indonesian instigated civilian conflicts. It has had its leaders victimised and subjected to mock trials which parody justice. It has had its civilians terrorised by state sponsored thugs, and its social fabric torn by religious violence instigated by ABRI provocateurs, where the innocent victims have been made the culprits.

The East Timorese people have seen it all before, it has been the staple of life during these traumatic twenty one years! CNRM Special Representative, José Ramos Horta said at a recent international gathering with Indonesian pro-democracy fighters "my Indonesian friends...our struggle and fate are intertwined, not only by virtue of geography, but by the nature of the regime that is responsible for the crimes perpetrated against our two peoples".

The National Council of Maubere Resistance of East Timor therefore strongly denounces and condemns the current events in Indonesia, which are the sole responsibility of the Suharto regime. It calls for independent investigations, the release of all those unjustly imprisoned and the punishment of all agents of state violence in accordance with due process of law.

CNRM expresses its deep solidarity with the people of Indonesia, who are fighting a struggle for freedom similar to that of the East Timorese people, against the same enemy, the oppressive and corrupt Suharto military-backed regime of Indonesia. Even if the nature of the two struggles is different, the East Timorese being one for self-determination, while the one of the Indonesian people is for democray and the rule of law, there is much room for joining forces and close cooperation against a common enemy

For over twenty years the people of East Timor have been pleading for help in their struggle against their brutal oppressors. The international community has chosen to ignore the East Timorese, bearing responsibility for the enormous human suffering that has resulted. May the world be prepared to listen this time to the similar cry of the oppressed people of Indonesia for freedom and justice and take action, preventing further suffering and the otherwise inevitable future turmoil.

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